Westlake Landfill Virtual Town Hall Meeting

Report

Region 7 Environmental Justice

4-2-2013

Region 7 Environmental Justice was asked to conduct a study on a possible virtual town hall meeting for the Bridgeton, MO and the communities that have been directly affected by the Westlake Landfill. The purpose of the meeting is to have a more direct and healthy line of communication between the community and R7 EPA Westlake team. Regional Administrator Karl Brooks wants to reach the community on a more individual or smaller group size; then the previous larger town hall meetings that was held on January of 2013. The communication between the community and the Westlake team must be as transparent and open as possible in order to build a trusting relationship between the community and Region 7 EPA. Concerns were brought when very few community members had a chance to speak their view point due to the high volume of special emphasis groups; each speaking their view.

R7 EPA's has tool set in place in order to guide staff through proven methods on communicating  with the community. The Community Involvement Program (CIP) is designed to keep the public informed of site progress, establish appropriate communication venues, and provide opportunities for public input during site activities.  The primary goal is to involve the community in site cleanup decisions as required by the Superfund law. EPA R7 will strive to achieve the following objectives through the implementation of the community involvement program.

Objectives from CIP

1.  Share site information with the community on a timely basis and in non-technical language.
2. Encourage and publicize opportunities for community input regarding site activities and proposed cleanup plans.
3. Notify local officials, residents, and businesses in the site area before field work or other site actions take place.
4. Maintain site information in the community and make it accessible to all interested residents and other stakeholders.
5. Increase the level of awareness and understanding of the Superfund process and specific activities involved in the process

OPA and EJ offices conducted a research to see what approaches would be best for community engagement and outreach. Several calls were made to local elected officials, private citizens, and non-profit organizations (these interviews can be reviewed as attachments to this report). Research was drafted to see how service organizations communicated with the local public. The results of the interviews indicated that Bridgeton MO lies on a fiber trunk and has excellent accessibility to the internet. However, The community members may lack the accessibility to connect to various platforms of communication particularly electronic forms of communication. The citizens of this community are not considered to be very technically savvy due to their age group, financial burdens, or lack of knowledge of IT equipment. With that said, there were sites researched that had specific information to the Westlake Land fill and other location of high environmental concerns to the community. These site, such as, Facebook and Twitter have become a very popular platform, with the very highly used iPhones and wireless availability; which allows the local citizen to be instantly connected to the group at large with instant information. The research team also took into consideration a study performed by the PEW Research Center on Internet and Public Life. A study on the digital divide was used alongside the Bridgeton results. The PEW study shows identical results to that of the R7 research. It is recommended that a virtual town hall meeting would be ideal for this community. Using the electronic platforms allows for the Regional Administrator to speak or communicate with the public directly, the research shows that the community is fearful with the "lack of communication" that they feel has been taking place in the past. This approach will ease the fears of the community and allow for the Regional Administrator to discuss the approach that the Agency will be taking and the teamwork between the community the state and the EPA that will be needed in order to have a successful partnership. A Meeting is currently being arranged for the 1st week of May so that R7 can reach the community as soon as possible.

**Interviews taken by community members**

Questions for residents: <mark>Joseph Turner</mark> (Boenker Estate Residents)

1. How do you currently receive information regarding the Westlake Landfill? Communicate with the mgr of dump.

   We distribute information rather than receive.  But from the superfund site we receive it from EPA by meetings and flyers.  We occasionally meet MDNR people here at the house when they are walking through; there was a man up here in a truck a second ago.

2. How would you prefer to receive information pertaining to Westlake Landfill from the EPA?

   I would like to see the city governement become involved more than they have, we are in ward 2 and have two council members and would like to see more from them. People from the community at large are impacted severely. I talk to people on a regular basis, it is not a local smell, it can be located as far as 4 miles from here. Community, from my observation, arm ore concern with smell than the nuclear issue, due to home value. I think everyone is in a state of shock that the material was dumped here on us. Introduce myself to mayor bowers

3. Do you have internet access? (<mark>yes</mark> or no)

4. Would you feel comfortable getting information from EPA regarding the Westlake Landfill through:
   - e-mail, (<mark>yes</mark> or no)
   - text message,  (yes or <mark>no</mark>)
   - facebook updates, (yes or <mark>no</mark>)
   - web-site updates
   - twitter (yes <mark>or no</mark>)
   - direct mail (yes or <mark>no</mark>)
   - public meetings (<mark>yes</mark> or no)
   - other (please list)

5. If EPA were to offer online town hall meetings about the Westlake Landfill would you be interested in accessing it?

   a. <mark>Yes,</mark> and I have access either in my home or through other means and would not need further assistance in order to access the town hall meeting.

   I am your A typical Bridgeton resident. I am a computer guy and I do everything online, but that's me. I talk to a lot of people in Bridgeton and most of them being elderly. They would likely not be able to attend these virtual meetings. But there are maybe 20 or 30

percent of the people that I come in contact with that do have a computer and use it frequently. I am a computer guy and help people out with most of the time.

    b.   Yes, I would like to access on-line town hall meetings, but do not have access in my home.

    c.   No, I am not interested.

6.  Does your neighborhood have internet access?
Our neighbors are Dan and Marie Harris and they do not have accessibility due to their lack of interest.

7.  Is there anything you would ask of us?

I'm glad you (EPA) are on the case, it's seems to have been forgotten in most people's mind and I think there needs to be a better openness, I applaud the meeting that was in January and welcome more; although I know that can cost quite a bit of money and I know budget restrains can be an issue, but I believe that communication by whatever means necessary is good.

8.  Do you have anything to add?
Electronic communication in Bridgeton is iffy a best, they do not use the internet too much in this area due to elderly age. You may contact me through my email, if you could please send me an email when we are finished so that I can save your contact information.

9.  Is there anyone else in the community we should talk to? Dan and marrie harris serverjoe@gmail.com

Questions for residents: <mark>Ken Meyer</mark>: 12813 Spanish Village Dr. Bridgeton MO 63044 <mark>314-739-3518</mark>

10. How do you currently receive information regarding the Westlake Landfill?

    I go to the Landfill website a http://westlakelandfill.com/

11. How would you prefer to receive information pertaining to Westlake Landfill from the EPA?

    Email or through the website http://westlakelandfill.com/

12. Do you have internet access? (yes or no)

13. Would you feel comfortable getting information from EPA regarding the Westlake Landfill through:
    - e-mail, (yes or no)
    - text message, (yes or no)
    - facebook updates, (yes or no)
    - web-site updates YES
    - twitter NO
    - direct mail YES
    - public meetings YES
    - other (please list)

14. If EPA were to offer online town hall meetings about the Westlake Landfill would you be interested in accessing it?

    d. Yes, and I have access either in my home or through other means and would not need further assistance in order to access the town hall meeting.

    e. Yes, I would like to access on-line town hall meetings, but do not have access in my home.

    f. No, I am not interested.

15. Does your neighborhood have internet access? YES

16. Is there anything you would ask of us? Not that I can think of

17. Do you have anything to add?
    I attended the Simon Law Firm meeting, they set me up for a one on one but I cancelled when I heard what they had to say. They seemed to be changing what the stat and EPA had been telling us. I didn't feel that it was right so I withdrew my name, It seemed to me that they were preparing for a class action law suit.

18. Is there anyone else in the community we should talk to?
    Not anyone that comes to mind.

Questions for residents: Dan Harris: 3484 Foerster Rd Bridgeton MO 63044 314-739-6238

19. How do you currently receive information regarding the Westlake Landfill?
Flyer or by mail

20. How would you prefer to receive information pertaining to Westlake Landfill from the EPA?
Direct mail

21. Do you have internet access? (yes or no)

22. Would you feel comfortable getting information from EPA regarding the Westlake Landfill through:
- e-mail, (yes or no)
- text message, (yes or no)
- facebook updates, (yes or no)
- web-site updates
- twitter
- mail: direct
- public meetings
- other (please list): door to door flyers

23. If EPA were to offer online town hall meetings about the Westlake Landfill would you be interested in accessing it?

g. Yes, and I have access either in my home or through other means and would not need further assistance in order to access the town hall meeting.

h. Yes, I would like to access on-line town hall meetings, but do not have access in my home.

i. No, I am not interested.

24. Does your neighborhood have internet access? Yes neighbor is Joseph Turner

25. Is there anything you would ask of us? Not that I can think of at the moment

26. Do you have anything to add?

I appreciate you getting information out to the community; I am disabled and cannot move out of the house. It is important for me to know what actions are being taken.


Is there anyone else in the community we should talk to? Not that I can think of

**Interviews taken by Non Profit Organization**

Pastor John Shear
Calvin Presbyterian Church 12567 Natural Bridge Rd  Bridgeton, MO 63044
(314) 739-3066

Questions for community service providers and community leaders: Calvin Presbyterian Church

1. Do you have responsibility to communicate with residents in the area near the Westlake Landfill site?  If so, please describe how you communicate (i.e. Mail, e-mail, text, web-site, etc)?

   A. Yes, We are a church and it is a topic of discussion, it is word of mouth. We receive newsprint, TV media, and radio stations. Much more has been provided in print

2. Are you aware of the level of internet access of most residents and if so, can you tell me about that?

   A. I can tell you within 200 of our congregation that do not have access. We do have our own page and com

3. Can you describe your electronic communication with local residents, if any (e-mail, text, facebook, twitter, web-site, etc)?

   A) FB, weekly email letter to everyone on list

4. Are people responsive to your electronic communication and do they take actions when communicated with using electronic mediums (i.e. attend events, take actions at home, participate in activities)

   A) people are very responsive to the electronic communication

5. When you advertise events and activities using a web-site, e-mail, or text what is the level of responsiveness?

   A) We use marquee/ LIT board that is used to advertise special events, we also print flyer and send to most retail outlets that are smaller stores that allow us to distribute, We have a MCD's that allows us to put on the doors which we know receives a large amount of traffic

6. Which electronic medium do you think is most successful when communicating with local residents?

   A)  I think sending out our email letter is probably more effective than FB because people check email more than FB.

7. Do you communicate with residents in the area using e-mail and if so, how effective is it?

A) We do occasionally have an email set up so that people can communicate with the church, there is usually a really great response to this set up. Another thing that works well, such as a funeral, we send out an email requesting assistance from our church family.
Does your facility have equipment available to the public to help with computer accessibility and/or do you have space available to host electronic meetings? We ended up buying an old Circuit City bldg and rent out space that we do not use, we use 15k of the 32k which is leased out.

8. Is there any advice you can give me regarding what works and doesn't work both electronically and in other formats when communicating with this community, based on your experience?

    A) Prior to me going into Pastor work I was in politics, I am very familiar with St Louis County and how info gets out,. The most effective I can recall was that we got people involved with town hall meetings. I would imagine since this is an issue that effects people on a day to day basis, and by going through the elected officials then you could get the information distributed.

9. Is there anything you would ask of us?

    A) Again because of my background in the county politics as well as my current position in the community , please feel free to use me as a direct contact person going forward, we have a great facility that would house 80 and a sanctuary that hold 200 + …please keep us in mind when you are planning to come down and are looking for a room to hold a meeting.

10. Do you have anything to add?

    Here's my take on it, and again I bring in my experience on politics to it. The community of Bridgton that is most affected by the odor is probably  much older than the rest of the county, That said this community is more about face to face. Now that's not to say that they would not attend a virtual meeting. You need to focus on certain neighborhoods in order meet with the smaller groups. Even skyping in would work. I wish I had the magic answer, and even though the community is capable, there is a feeling that especially in politics, that the community wants to see the presenter in person.

11. Is there anyone else in the community we should talk to?
    I can think of several but here is my contact number if you need to reach me. I would like to be a point of contact in the future if you are needing to speak with anyone in this area.
    Pastor John Shear cell phone number 314-249-8024

1. Do you have responsibility to communicate with residents in the area near the Westlake Landfill site? If so, please describe how you communicate (i.e. Mail, e-mail, text, web-site, etc)?

   A) Yes, I have been with Computer Village for 27 years and I am frequesntly referred to as the " Computer Guy"

2. Are you aware of the level of internet access of most residents and if so, can you tell me about that?
   A) It is lower on the bell curve than you might think. Most due to economic hardship, they may have access to the internet but may not have the skill set to use the computer in order to access the www. Maybe due to income per capita, lower achievement in schools, fewer computers in the home or they have the computer but it is not in proper working order and therefore cannot access the internet

3. Can you describe your electronic communication with local residents, if any (e-mail, text, facebook, twitter, web-site, etc)?

   A) We use email, Facebook (FB) and Twitter, and we also teach tech skills by operating around 23 different locations, we work from ages 4-104yrs of age. We work a lot in summer programs, working mostly with parents and children, we also attempt to inspire the parent to assist in teaching the child. Our programs focus more on math and science as we teach computer skills, but we also try to teach a lot more than just computer skills. We use the computer as a tool to reach out to the community.

4. Are people responsive to your electronic communication and do they take actions when communicated with using electronic mediums (i.e. attend events, take actions at home, participate in activities)?

   A) We have set scheduled classes and they are advertised through word of mouth and through our FB and Twitter accounts. We also collaborate with a lot of different organizations, whether it is Public Housing, local officals or NAACP. In doing so we always try to put our classes where people can make it. For instance, we wnet into a senior citizen community and held a class in one of the empty apartments. That became our temporary class room for that community. We do have customers that communicate by electronic but it is mostly word of mouth. I have been working with Computer Village for over 17years and I am commonly reffered to as the "computer Man" in the community, so it's safe to say that word-of-mouth is how we distribute most of our information. Even though we do flood the other avenues with information, word of mouth is the most effective means for us to communicate.

5. When you advertise events and activities using a web-site, e-mail, or text what is the level of responsiveness? See answer #4

6. Which electronic medium do you think is most successful when communicating with local residents?

A) Facebook.

7. Do you communicate with residents in the area using e-mail and if so, how effective is it?

   A) Again, most of our customers already know of our presence and use word of mouth to gather information.

8. Does your facility have equipment available to the public to help with computer accessibility and/or do you have space available to host electronic meetings?

   A) Yes, we have over 20 locations and over 40 teachers, as I stated, we attempt to take the education to the community, and not have the community come to us.

9. Is there any advice you can give me regarding what works and doesn't work both electronically and in other formats when communicating with this community, based on your experience?

   A) I believe that a virtual meeting and virtual information can work in this community, however in order to do so, you will need to change the culture of the community pertaining to seeking information. You will need to go into their housing offices, elected officials, and any other avenue in which the community gathers information and bombard them with the approach you are wanting to take. Initially you may not receive the response you are looking for but it will take time to change their culture.

10. Is there anything you would ask of us?

    A) I feel that I am not the best person to speak on this matter because I am always going to be behind anything that is pushing for more education in these communities. This is my life, teaching with modern technologies and attempting to assist the public. I feel that you can get the community to adapt and I think it is a great idea.

11. Do you have anything to add? Please see Answer #10

12. Is there anyone else in the community we should talk to?

    A) You should speak with MIKE NELSON who works with Computer Village he has been very instrumental in trying to get Environmental focused classes to our community. We are planning classes this summer with kids in trying to teach them the importance air and water is by teach them urban farming.

information they want or conduct the communication they want. About one in five (21%) mention price-related reasons, and a similar number cite usability issues (such as not knowing how to go online or being physically unable to). Only 6% say that a lack of access or availability is the *main* reason they don't go online. [8]

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## The main reasons non-internet users do not use the internet

*In May 2010, 21% of American adults age 18+ did not use the internet. (This number is 22% as of August 2011.) When asked the main reason they do not go online (in their own words), these are the factors they cite.*

|  | % of offline adults |
|---|---|
| **What is the MAIN reason you don't use the internet or email?** | |
| Just not interested | 31% |
| Don't have a computer | 12 |
| Too expensive | 10 |
| Too difficult | 9 |
| It's a waste of time | 7 |
| Don't have access | 6 |
| Don't have time to learn | 6 |
| Too old to learn | 4 |
| Don't want/need it | 4 |
| Just don't know how | 2 |
| Physically unable | 2 |
| Worried about viruses/spyware/spam | 1 |
| Other | 6 |

**Source:** Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 29-May 30, 2010 Tracking Survey. N=2,252 adults 18 and older (n=496 for non-internet users).
**More:** http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Home-Broadband-2010.aspx

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Most of these non-users have never used the internet before, and don't have anyone in their household who does. About one in five (21%) say that they know enough about technology to start using the internet on their own, and only one in ten told us that they were interested in using the internet or email in the future.

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[8] For more about non-internet users, see http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2010/Home-Broadband-2010.aspx

*% of American adults age 18+ who have a high-speed broadband connection at home, as of August 2011.*

| | % who access the internet via broadband at home |
|---|---|
| **All adults (age 18+)** | **62%** |
| Men | 65 |
| Women | 59 |
| **Race/ethnicity** | |
| White, Non-Hispanic | 66 |
| Black, Non-Hispanic | 49* |
| Hispanic (English- and Spanish-speaking) | 51* |
| **Age** | |
| 18-29 | 76 |
| 30-49 | 70 |
| 50-64 | 60 |
| 65+ | 30 |
| **Household income** | |
| Less than $30,000/yr | 41 |
| $30,000-$49,999 | 66 |
| $50,000-$74,999 | 81 |
| $75,000+ | 89 |
| **Educational attainment** | |
| No high school diploma | 22 |
| High school grad | 52 |
| Some College | 73 |
| College + | 85 |

* All differences are statistically significant <u>except</u> for those between the rows designated with an asterisk.

**Source:** The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project's August Tracking Survey conducted July 25-August 26, 2011. N=2,260 adults age 18 and older, including 916 interviews conducted by cell phone. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish.

## The power of mobile

Currently, 88% of American adults age 18 and older have a cell phone, 57% have a laptop, 19% own an e-book reader, and 19% have a tablet computer; about six in ten adults (63%) go online wirelessly with one of those devices. Gadget ownership is generally correlated with age, education, and household income, although some devices—notably e-book readers and tablets[20]—are as popular or even more popular with adults ages 30-49 than those under 30.

### Adult gadget ownership over time (2006-2012)

*% of American adults age 18+ who own each device*
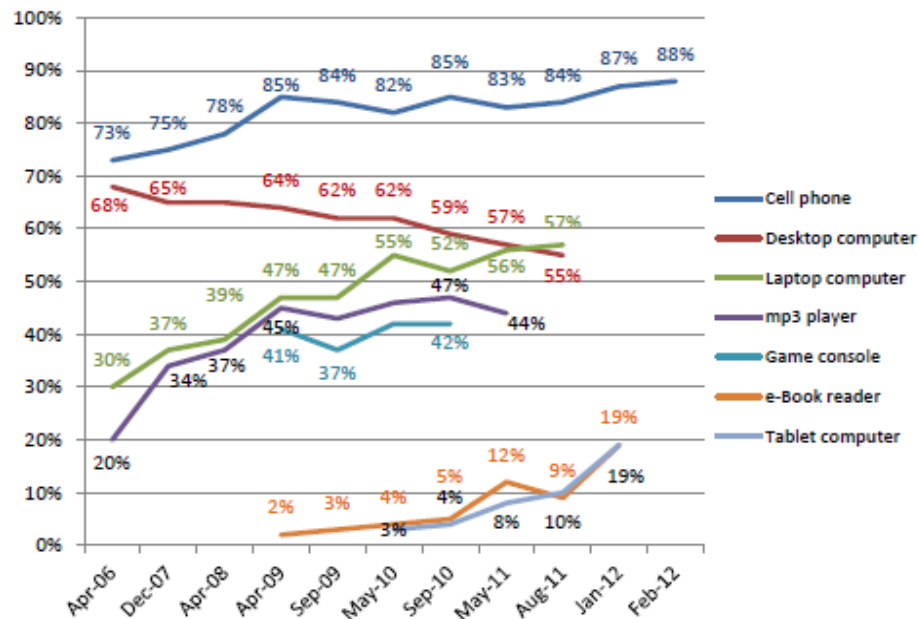


Source: Pew Internet surveys, 2006-2012.

As our research has documented the rise of mobile internet use, we have also noticed a "mobile difference": Once someone has a wireless device, she becomes much more active in how she uses the internet—not just with wireless connectivity, but also with wired devices. The same holds true for the impact of wireless connections and people's interest in using the internet to connect with others. These

## Smartphone ownership by age & income/education

*% of adults within each group who own a smartphone (for example, 58% of 18-29 year olds with a household income of less than $30,000 per year are smartphone owners)*

| | 18-29 (n=336) | 30-49 (n=601) | 50-64 (n=639) | 65+ (n=626) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **All adults** | **66%** | **59%** | **34%** | **13%** |
| **Annual Household Income** | | | | |
| Less than $30,000 | 58 | 42 | 16 | 5 |
| $30,000 or more | 72 | 69 | 44 | 27 |
| **Educational Attainment** | | | | |
| High school grad or less | 63 | 43 | 22 | 8 |
| Some college or college graduate | 70 | 71 | 44 | 20 |

**Source:** Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project January 20-February 19, 2012 tracking survey. N=2,253 adults age 18 and older, including 901 interviews conducted on respondent's cell phone. Interviews conducted in both English and Spanish.

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[23] The highest rates of smartphone ownership are seen among young adults ages 25-34, 71% of whom own a smartphone.